1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

work lay in my vicinity, and with Miss P. M. Deane, Colonial Research Fellow, who visited Ngoniland and who kindly placed her data at my disposal. Their researches threw much light on my own.

The literature on the Ngoni is considerable, and my work has been helped by the reports of earlier writers. Professor Read visited the Fort Jameson Ngoni in 1935, and those of my informants who had met her recalled her visit with great pleasure. I was often able to allay suspicion by explaining that I was trying to do the same kind of work as she had done earlier. In addition to published reports I have made considerable use of official dispatches and other archival material relating to the conquest of the Ngoni by the British in 1898.

For kind permission to quote from other works, I am indebted to the Oxford University Press and the International African Institute (in respect of *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi* by Meyer Fortes), the Director of Agriculture, Northern Rhodesia Government (*The Soils, Vegetation and Agriculture of North-Eastern Rhodesia* by C. G. Trapnell), and The Editor, *Scottish Geographical Magazine* ('A Trip to Northern Angoniland', by H. Crawford Angus).

In preparing this book, I have to thank Miss D. Goldstein and Mr. J. Paing for help with diagrams and maps. Professors Schapera and Evans-Pritchard, Dr. Peristiany and Dr. Kaberry read the manuscript and I have been very grateful for their comments. Finally, I would thank my wife for companionship and assistance in the field, and for unremitting help in the arduous task of writing.

J. A. B.

Meling, Norway
1952

Postscript:

Since this book has gone to press, the British territories of Central Africa have been united in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This momentous step in the development of the region has been accompanied by a major shift in the balance of power between the Administration, the White settlers and the indigenous African population. I do not know in detail how the Ngoni people have responded to this change. Federation was a topic of conversation among them even while I was carrying out this study, and several Ngoni men have been prominent in the political negotiations of the last four years. It seems, therefore, highly likely that the operation of the political structure discussed in the last two chapters

The distinctiveness of Ngoni institutions, so often emphasized by the older men and by the early travellers in Nyasaland, was due to cultural affinities with the South-eastern Bantu. The attached table sets out those social and cultural elements in the Ngoni kingdoms which were most distinct from parallel features among the neighbouring peoples, and which had obvious affinity with South-eastern Bantu cultures. The main Ngoni cultural elements have already been referred to in this chapter and will be further discussed in the rest of this study. The corresponding elements among the local peoples are based partly on the earlier sources quoted by Tew and partly on local informants and my own observations. In collecting information about clans, the *mbumba* group consisting of a man with his sisters' children, and the girls' initiation schools, I had no direct contacts with any except Cewa sources.

Variations in cultural conformity among the Ngoni

In the Ngoni kingdoms among families with Swazi and trans-Zambesi clan descent names there was considerable variation in the degree to which they maintained Ngoni institutions and practised Ngoni cultural forms. The anthropologist was constantly aware that the time element was an important factor in the consolidation of Ngoni practices and in the attitudes developed towards Ngoni culture among the individuals in the different generations. The Ngoni in both kingdoms spoke of the 'older generations' (*mibadwo wa kale*), 'the middle generations' (*mibadwo wa mpkati*), and 'the present generation' (*mibadwo wa tsopano*). The first had grown to adulthood before the Europeans came, and were the older senior men and women in the 1930's; the second had been affected by European missionaries, traders, and officials while they were young men and women; the third had never known anything but European contacts and many had grown up in European schools. The senior Ngoni of the older generation often expressed the sentiment: *zatha zonse tsopano* (everything is finished now). They included in that saying the regrets of the older Ngoni for their former independence, and their resentment at the domination of European rule and European culture. It is idle to speculate what cultural changes might have taken place in the Ngoni kingdoms if European influence had been postponed another twenty to thirty years. Nevertheless it is a vital factor in assessing Ngoni culture that the kingdoms had barely twenty years of independent existence before the Europeans began to penetrate Nyasaland. The older Ngoni looked back on their former independent existence as a golden age in which they were spreading Ngoni customs and culture as well as exercising political supremacy. It is difficult to believe that this was wholly true, in view of the extensive cultural interchange going on in the country as a whole. It is, however, possible that wider acceptance of Ngoni cultural elements was prevented by the advent of the Europeans, in so far as cultural institutions and political dominance were closely

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INTRODUCTION

MARRIAGE among the Ngoni is much the same as anywhere else. It establishes a relationship between a man and a woman, regulates their sexual activities, locates their children in the kinship system and influences the inheritance of their property. These general features, however, do no more than define and identify marriage, and distinguish marriage from concubinage. Our task is to analyse the particular features that distinguish Ngoni marriage from other marriage systems and to relate marriage to other institutions and social processes in Ngoni society.

In Ngoni history there has always been marriage. Indeed men and women look back longingly to a past when people married properly and decorously, and when adulterers were killed, and bemoan the promiscuity of the present when no woman's fidelity is certain. Yet even now old people still expect their juniors to marry and their expectations are fulfilled. Adults are assumed to be married, and the assumption is justified.

Marriage is seen by the Ngoni as part of the natural order. Unmarried adults cannot fill important roles and are regarded as overgrown children whose anomalous condition must be explained by reference to a malady or a physical or moral defect. Yet despite the universal and permanent character of marriage as an Ngoni institution there have been, in the course of the hundred and thirty years which constitute Ngoni history, great changes in the procedures and implications of marriage and in its relations to other aspects of the social life of which it is a part. These changes have been paralleled in other Ngoni institutions, in law, in local organization, in religion and above all in political structure. In this paper we shall attempt to contrast the institution of marriage as seen at two stages in Ngoni history and to relate it to the general plan of social life at these two periods. We shall also discuss some of the processes of change that have brought about the differences we observe and which to some extent are still at work in contemporary Ngoni society.

It is convenient to compare marriage as it was during the 1890's and as it is at the present day. The information relating to the earlier period is contained only to a slight extent in contemporary documents,[1] and consists largely in the recollections of older men and women as recorded by a number of writers from 1914 onwards. The

[1] The most important of these are Wiese's articles, 'Expedição portugueza a M'Pesêne (1889)', in *Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa*, x (1891) pp. 235-73, 331-430, 465-97, and xi (1892) pp. 373-599. (All page references cited are from Vol. X); and 'Beitrage zür Geschichte der Zulu im Norden des Zambesi, namentlich der Angoni,' *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xxxii (1900), pp. 181-200.

information is insufficient for any reconstruction in great detail, but the general principles are clear and to some extent our conclusions can be checked by reference to material from other areas, particularly the nineteenth century accounts of the Ngoni of Northern Nyasaland and the Zulu. The account of present-day marriage is based on information collected in the field during 1946-9.[1]

The period of the 1890's is chosen for comparison with the present because of the catastrophic change in Ngoni life which occurred in 1898 when they were defeated by the British. Old people who were alive during the period are still available for questioning and many younger people have been told of those times by their parents and grandparents. Although Ngoni cannot generally remember beyond their grandparents, genealogies collected now yield some information about the 1890's and link that period to the present. Important social changes occurred in 1898, changes which for the greater part were, and still are, regretted by the Ngoni, and these accentuate the difference between time present and time past. The past is recollected and recounted and has a moral value. Children are taught the glories of the past to compensate them for the inadequacies of the present. The teaching of tribal history as a school subject reinforces this view. With the passage of time the past has been idealized and simplified but the picture is still clear enough for us to be able to distinguish probable fact from unlikely rationalization. Marriage in 'the time of peace', as the period prior to 1898 is called, is one aspect of this picture.

Marriage is one part of kinship, for it is by the twin processes of marriage and childbirth that the web of kinship is spun. For the purposes of our analysis we have had to sever marriage from its context in what may appear at times rather an arbitrary fashion. A society is a whole, if not always a well integrated whole, and no one part of it can be fully understood without a simultaneous knowledge of all its other parts. Societies persist, more or less, through time, and it is clear that we cannot hope to grasp the total significance of the working of a society at any one time without a knowledge of the changes or lack of change in that society both before and after. Yet we cannot marshal all these relationships simultaneously, let alone present them through the medium of words. Our attempt to comprehend the present cannot wait until we have full knowledge of the future, and our analysis of one sector of a system must proceed in advance of our synthesis of the whole. Ngoni society has persisted through the last sixty years rather less than more, and it may well be argued that present-day Ngoni society is poorly integrated. Nevertheless it is to be hoped that an analysis of Ngoni marriage may, on the one hand, demonstrate

[1] I made two visits to the Fort Jameson Ngoni while on the staff of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, spending in all a year and eight months there. I was assisted by my clerk, Mr. M. B. Lukhero, in inquiring into former conditions as well as observing contemporary social life.